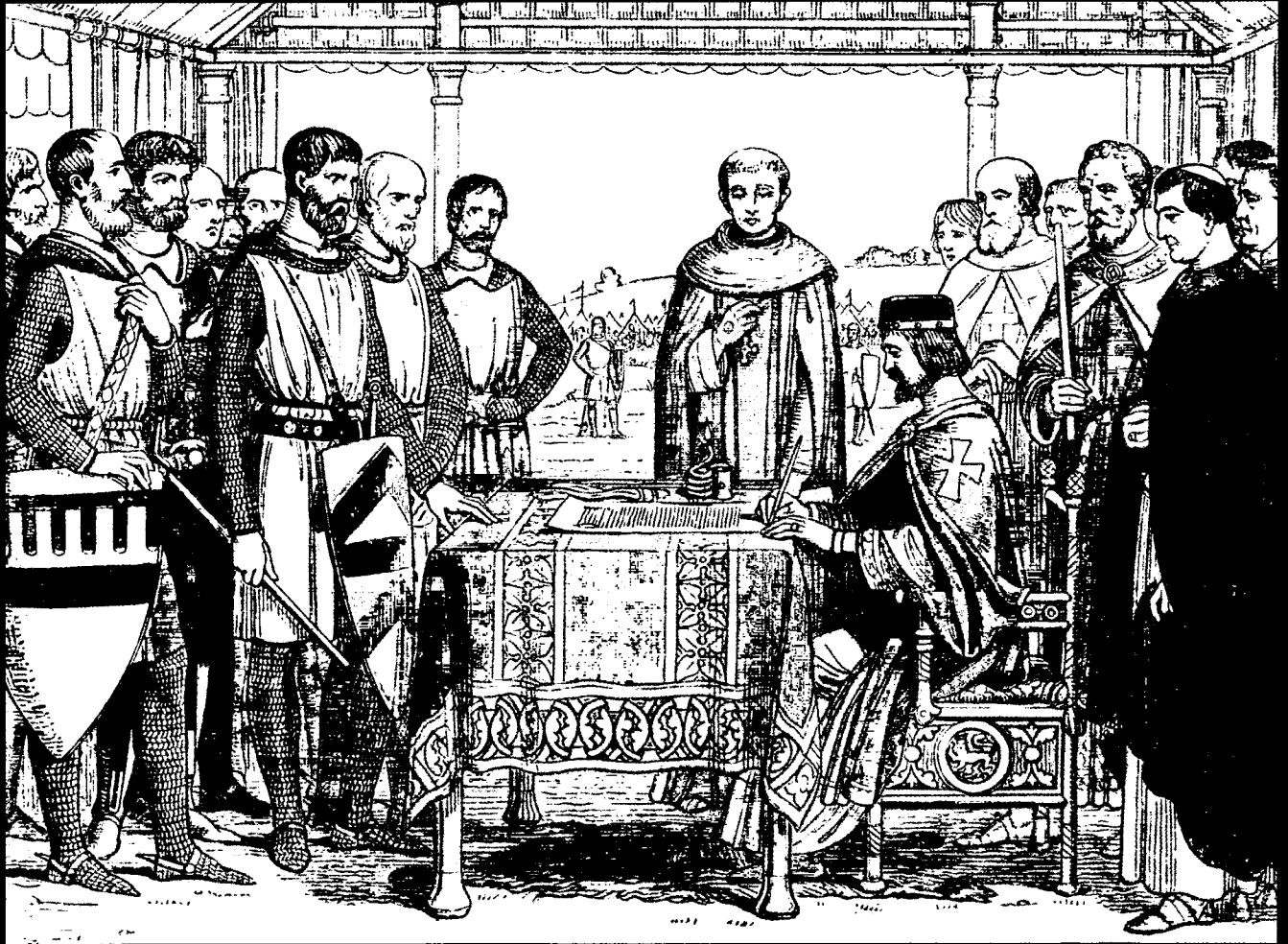


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MAGNA CARTA 800TH ANNIVERSARY

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MAGNA CARTA PIE

(OR, THE DAY THE LAW CAME ALIVE)

By Charles Eskridge, Esquire

Based on the song "American Pie"
Words and music by Don McLean

This song was written and performed as part of the Garland R. Walker American Inn of Court presentation on Magna Carta at its March 2015 meeting. For their good-natured suggestions and inspiration, Mr. Eskridge thanks the group leaders Jim Cooper, Judge Jeff Shadwick, and in particular Judge Jennifer Elrod, who first voiced the line "the day the law came alive." It all flowed from there.

[Intro]

A long, long time ago,
I can still remember when the sovereign once had
all control.
The king would promise to do good,
But then it seemed he never would,
Until the people's freedoms he had stole.

The days were grim in 1215—
Ceaseless wars and in between,
Slight food for the family,
Jail time without a jury.

I can't recall if King John cried,
When from his grip power was pried,
But something touched us deep inside—
The day the law came alive.

[Intro chorus]

By and by, Magna Carta did climb,
From the fields at Runnymede to the highest
of highs.
Ye olde vassals and serfs were drinking mead, ale,
and wine,
Singing, "On this day the law came alive.
On this day the law came alive."

[Verse 1]

Now did John sign it out of love?
Or was it fear in God above?
No, 'twas the barons told him so.
With their swords drawn they refused to barter,
And put his seal to the Great Charter,
But would the word be kept that was bestowed?

Well, John signed that day to save his hide,
Time quickly proved how he had lied,
But no power could he regain—
The next year he was in his grave!

And when thrones later sought back those
grants gifted,
The people held fast and long resisted,
Knowing so well they had been lifted,
The day the law came alive.

[Chorus]

They started singing, "By and by, Magna Carta
did climb,
From the fields at Runnymede to the highest
of highs."
Ye olde vassals and serfs were drinking mead, ale,
and wine,
Singing, "On this day the law came alive.
On this day the law came alive."

[Verse 2]

O'er decades and scores the Parliament saw
"By the law of the land" bear "due process of law,"
Yet the task remained the same.
So Charles lost his head; Cromwell brought
 great dread;
And James across the Thames to France he fled—
Monarchs are so hard fully to tame.

And when in the year one six eight nine,
England gave Mary and William their right divine,
With them there would be no fight,
To sign the English Bill of Rights!

Knowing this plus their Locke and Montesquieu,
The colonists wondered what they had to do,
To show their rights already proved,
The day the law came alive.

[Chorus]

They were singing, "By and by, Magna Carta did climb,
From the fields at Runnymede to the highest of highs."
Ye olde vassals and serfs were drinking mead, ale,
 and wine,
Singing, "On this day the law came alive.
On this day the law came alive."

[Verse 3]

Into Boston Harbor they heaved some tea,
And gathered on the Commons 'round Liberty Tree,
So a Revolution came to pass.
Jefferson next took up his quill,
To secure these rights he said we will,
Among these life, liberty, and happiness.

Battles won, and towards that more perfect union,
Our founders framed a great Constitution,
But when rights saw such spare detail,
For more many said we'd prevailed!

So Madison had one further thing to write,
And in mind of the Charter, Congress set its sights,
'Til we had our own Bill of Rights —
As on the day the law came alive.

[Chorus]

We started singing, "By and by, Magna Carta did climb,
From the fields at Runnymede to the highest of highs."
Ye olde vassals and serfs were drinking mead, ale,
 and wine,
Singing, "On this day the law came alive.
On this day the law came alive."

[Verse 4]

Some were left behind as we took our gains,
When a people here found themselves in chains —
Four score and seven set straight that path.

Others lost their land, and half could not vote,
Still the barons' promise remained afloat,
Reminding it is ever today's task.

As we watched where rights did not belong,
Time proved true those once thought wrong.
We learned not to just stand by,
But to share the American pie!

Today around this world people cast their eyes,
And dream their children might see in their lives,
If they could but only claim the prize,
Of the day the law came alive.

[Chorus]

And we're singing, "By and by, Magna Carta did climb,
From the fields at Runnymede to the highest of highs."
Ye olde vassals and serfs were drinking mead, ale,
 and wine,
Singing, "On this day the law came alive.
On this day the law came alive."

[Outro]

This story now is almost through,
We hope you have enjoyed our tune,
But we have one more thing to say.
This thing that we call liberty,
'Tis not something to us came free,
Nor granted here that it shall always stay.

Eight hundred years in the rearview mirror,
Each generation must bring nearer,
A promise all but unspoken—
The rule of law unbroken.

And these things we admire most,
Of privileges and rights we boast,
They trace their way back beyond our coast—
To where the law came alive.

[Outro chorus]

And they were singing, "By and by, Magna Carta
 did climb,
From the fields at Runnymede to the highest of highs."
Ye olde vassals and serfs were drinking mead, ale,
 and wine,
Singing, "On this day the law came alive.
On this day the law came alive."

And so we're singing, "By and by, Magna Carta did climb,
From the fields at Runnymede to the highest of highs."
Ye olde vassals and serfs were drinking mead, ale,
 and wine,
Singing, "On this day the law came alive." ♦

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